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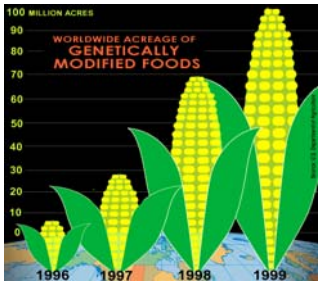
March 26, 2008

Fears Grow Over ‘Catastrophic’ US Biosphere Collapse

By: Sorcha Faal, and as reported to her Western Subscribers *(Traducción al Español abajo)*



Scientists from the Russian Academy of Agricultural Sciences (RAAS) are reporting in the Kremlin today of the ‘*imminent and catastrophic’* collapse of the United States agriculture sector due to the rampant, and unforeseen, consequences relating to rapidly mutating genetically modified strains of crops inundating their biosphere.

These reports detail that the first casualties of mass biosphere genetic poisoning will always occur first in plant pollinators, and which has been confirmed as occurring in the United States, and as we can read as reported by the BBC News Service:

*"A mystery illness that has scientists baffled is wiping out tens of thousands of bats across the north-east of the US."*

"*The pollination of crops by bees is responsible for a third of the food produced in the US. One in every three mouthfuls has been touched by their tiny feet; but our six-legged friends are in trouble.*

*They are getting sick and leaving their hives. Without bees, food gets more expensive - some products could disappear altogether. Colony collapse disorder (CCD) emerged last year, and by spring 2007 bees were dying in huge numbers - over the year as a whole the total bee population fell by 30%.*

*Some beekeepers lost closer to 90%, and the fear is it will get worse. Beekeeper Gilly Sherman says: "It's worse than last year, and last year was worse than the year before, so it's bad, and there are a lot of good big beekeepers that are having a lot of problems.*

*"I think we're coming in for a big train wreck."*

Even more disturbing, these reports continue, is that this genetic poisoning appears to have now hit mammal populations in the US, with their State of Minnesota, one of America’s leading agriculture States, and the third largest planters of genetically modified crops in America, now reporting that the moose population in their northeastern regions are dying in record numbers and nearing extinction, and which is the area of that State most concentrated

with these mutant crops.

How critical this situation in the United States has become is stated in a report by US Center for Food Safety, and which says, *"It has been estimated that 70-75 percent of processed foods on supermarket shelves--from soda to soup, crackers to condiments--contain genetically engineered ingredients."*

One could reasonably expect that a Nation facing such a catastrophe as the United States with the destruction of its biosphere would begin to rapidly eliminate such a disaster from devastating their own citizens, except to note that these Western Nations are becoming so vile that this very week, in the United Nations, they actually declared '*victory*' when a resolution declaring water as a '*human right*' was defeated.

With food riots breaking out in Egypt and Cameroon this past week, and with the United Nations World Food Programme reporting it has no more funds to feed 73 million people, the events occurring in the United States do, indeed, speak towards the almost complete destruction of this once great Nation and its people.



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http://www.pmac.net/birdbee.htm

**Pesticide Impacts on Benefical Organisms**

**Our Forgotten Pollinators:**

**Protecting the Birds and Bees**

**By Mrill Ingram, Gary Nabhan and Stephen Buchmann.**

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**Source: Global Pesticide Campaigner**
**Volume 6, Number 4, December 1996**
**PANNA, San Francisco, CA**

**A recent survey revealed that only a small percentage of the American public understands the process of pollination or the diversity of beneficial animals involved in pollinating plants.1 For most Americans, pollen means allergies and bees mean stings. However, for one out of every three bites you eat, you should thank a bee, butterfly, bat, bird or other pollinator.**

**Pollination -- the transfer of pollen from one flower to another -- is critical to fruit and seed production, and is often provided by insects and other animals on the hunt for nectar, pollen or other floral rewards. In fact, animals provide pollination services for over three-quarters of the staple crop plants that feed human kind and for 90% of all flowering plants in the world.**

**According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), we are facing an "impending pollination crisis," in which both wild and managed pollinators are disappearing at**

**alarming rates owing to habitat loss, pesticide poisoning, diseases and pests.2 For the first time ever, local bee shortages in 1994 forced many California almond growers to import the bulk of the honey bees they needed from other states to ensure that their $800-million-a-year crop would be pollinated. Recent monitoring of pumpkins in New York State determined that their blossoms were still laden with pollen five hours after they opened in the morning, long after they are typically stripped of all pollen by bees.3**

**Food producers and consumers, scientists and educators, beekeepers and wildlife enthusiasts who are concerned that a basic fact of life -- our dependence on the functional relationships between plants and pollinators -- is being ignored have joined together to form the Forgotten Pollinators Campaign. The campaign seeks to heighten the public's awareness of the importance of pollinators and to urge action on the following points. Farms depend on pollinators**

**Insect pollination is a necessary step in the production of most fruits and vegetables that we eat and in regeneration of many forage crops used by livestock. Recent surveys document that more than 30 genera of animals -- consisting of hundreds of species of floral visitors -- are required to pollinate the 100 or so crops that feed the world.4 Only 15% of these crops are serviced by domestic honey bees, while at least 80% are pollinated by wild bees and other wildlife.**

**We must recognize that pollination is not a free service, and that investment and stewardship are required to protect and sustain it. Economic assessments of agricultural productivity should account for the "cost" of sustaining wild and managed pollinator populations. U.S. policymakers responsible for the recent cut in long-standing subsidies to beekeepers for honey production have further jeopardized the pollination services provided by honey bees, estimated to be 60 to 100 times more valuable than the market price of honey.5 Policy makers must begin devising programs that reward farmers for implementing practices to protect habitats of wild pollinators and provide incentives for those who wish to manage a wider variety of pollinators to assist farmers and orchard growers. A diversity of pollinators**

**Our recent analyses of global inventories of biodiversity indicate that more than 100,000 different animal species -- and perhaps as many as 200,000 -- play roles in pollinating the 250,000 kinds of wild flowering plants on this planet. In addition to countless bees (the world contains an estimated 40,000 species of bees), wasps, moths, butterflies, flies, beetles and other invertebrates, perhaps 1,500 species of vertebrates such as birds and mammals serve as pollinators. Hummingbirds are the best-known wildlife pollinators in the Americas, but perching birds, flying foxes, fruit bats, possums, lemurs and even a gecko function as effective pollinators elsewhere in the world. We must learn to appreciate the benefits that a diversity of pollinators provides.**

**Honey bees in decline**

**The number of commercial U.S. bee colonies plummeted from 5.9 million in the late 1940s to 4.3 million in 1985, and 2.7 million in 1995. The loss of one quarter of all managed honey bee colonies since 1990 signals one of the most severe declines U.S. agriculture has ever experienced in such a short period. There are fewer bee hives in the U.S. today than at any time in the last 50 years.**

**This demise has been brought on by the spread of diseases and parasitic mites, invasion of Africanized honey bees, exposure to pesticides, climatic fluctuations and elimination of government subsidies for beekeepers.6 And an increasing number of places around the U.S. are reporting pollinator scarcity.7 Studies of cucurbit pollination in Arizona, Alabama and Maine revealed that honey bees are in fact frequently absent from fields, and that bumblebees and ground nesting squash bees are doing the majority of the pollination.8 In recent years, some wildland habitats have lost 70% of their feral honey bees, which make hives in rocky outcroppings and other cavities.9**

**The arrival of Africanized bees in 99 U.S. counties since 1990 has forced some beekeepers to abandon apiaries in highly populated areas for fear of libel suits from neighbors. In addition, Africanized bees are among the carriers of parasitic mites infecting thousands of U.S. apiaries, killing off additional colonies.10**

**To minimize further declines, honey bee colonies need better monitoring and management. Yet, USDA is currently considering closing bee research laboratories. Bee research must be strengthened and expanded to include research on management of pollinators other than honey bees. Increasingly, other pollinators will have to be deployed to take up the slack created by the decline of honey-bee colonies. Orchard growers and farmers need to ensure that neighboring wild habitats remain suitable for wild pollinators if they are to secure pollination services for their crops.**

**For such reasons, government agencies such as the USDA, SARH/Mexico and Agriculture Canada should invest more resources in programs to manage a diversity of pollinators, to stabilize remaining apiaries, and to reward farmers for setting aside cropland and retaining hedgerows or windbreaks where wild pollinators nest and forage.**

**Protection from toxins**

**Whether managed or wild, pollinators need protection from excessive exposure to pesticides and other chemicals that can poison them or impair their reproduction. These chemicals can also eliminate nectar sources for pollinators, destroy larval host plants for moths and butterflies, and deplete nesting materials for bees.11**

**Few people realize that the U.S. now applies twice the amount of pesticides it used when Rachel Carson published Silent Spring in 1962.12 In Canada during the mid-1970s, aerial spraying of coniferous forest pests reduced native bee populations to the point that blueberry yields fell below the norm for four years.13**

**A large number of insecticides used in agriculture are toxic to pollinating insects, but only honey bee colonies can be moved away from fields prior to spraying. Even so, it has been estimated that 20% of all losses of honey-bee colonies involve some degree of pesticide exposure. According to a study on economic costs of pesticide use, honey bee poisonings result in an annual loss of $13.3 million in the U.S.14 Wild insect pollinators such as small solitary bees are even more vulnerable than honey bees to organophosphate pesticides that have largely replaced organochlorines like DDT. Field studies in the deserts of the U.S. have found that pollinators remaining in small fragments of natural habitat are particularly susceptible to insecticide spraying on adjacent croplands.15**

**Moreover, many crops that would benefit in quality and quantity from more thorough pollination are not sufficiently pollinated because of heavy pesticide applications. Cotton harvests, for example, could increase by as much as 20% if the flowers were fully pollinated by bees, and farm income could potentially increase by US$400 million per year. However, using bees to enhance cotton has proven impossible on a large scale where there has been continued intensive use of insecticides.16**

**Pesticide applicators need training in monitoring pollinators as well as pests. Pollination ecologists familiar with particular species can work with pesticide applicators who know about timing and the drift distances of chemicals under various weather conditions.17 When pesticides are applied by aircraft, as much as 50% to 75% of the chemicals sprayed can miss their target,18 leading to inadvertent exposure of nontarget organisms such as pollinators.**

**Alternative agricultural techniques can provide non-toxic methods of weed and insect control that incorporate use of habitat set-asides for beneficial insect populations and require the use of fewer toxins. Alternative strategies may help farmers reduce costs involved in crop management, and at the same time allow them to market organic produce at premium prices.**

**Both gardeners and farmers can rely on alternative non-toxic methods to control pests and weeds. More widespread practice of such methods has the potential to reduce wildlife exposure to insecticides, herbicides and fungicides.19 Urban dwellers can also reduce the amounts of toxins used around their homes, and by purchasing organic produce, they can provide economic incentives for growers to switch to more pollinator-friendly organic methods.**

**Habitat loss -- a major threat**

**Small isolated patches of wild habitat may look natural and healthy, but they often lack essential pollinators and seed dispersers that ensure regeneration of the biotic community.20 These animals typically require more habitat area than that covered by populations of the rarest plants. When large habitats are fragmented into small isolated patches, it is not long before some of the animal residents decline in numbers to the point that they no longer provide effective ecological services beneficial to plants.21 Globally, over 100 species of birds and mammals in sixty genera of vertebrate pollinators are already listed as endangered, and untold numbers of invertebrates are at risk as well.**

**Because some wild pollinators need undisturbed habitat for nesting, roosting and foraging, they are very susceptible to habitat degradation and fragmentation. Some pollinators require plants that flower sequentially, so that they have food sources throughout the season. Elimination of these sources by herbicide spraying or clearing of native vegetation can literally starve pollinators. In Costa Rica, wild bee diversity in degraded forest land dropped from 70 to 37 species in just 14 years. Population declines have also been confirmed for butterflies, moths, flying foxes and a host of other pollinators of food crops.22**

**We must find ways to reward farmers for setting aside land to support wild pollinators. Unplowed farmland set aside for several years can produce vegetation that supports considerable insect diversity and benefits nearby crops by providing pollinators and**

**other beneficial insects.23 Land use planners should work to create semi-natural buffers around small wildlife reserves to connect protected areas with undeveloped corridors and to designate pesticide-free zones within this matrix. Greenbelts and habitat set-asides need not always consist of pristine vegetation, but they must be large enough to provide safe nesting sites and a range of floral resources.**

**Endangered pollinators -- endangered plants.**

**In the larger picture, native pollinators are as important for wild plants as they are for crops. Yet the ultimate reproductive consequences of pollinator scarcity on wild plants is not appreciated and remains understudied.24**

**In Iowa, where only 200 acres of unplowed "virgin" prairie remain intact, prairie wildflowers now suffer low seed yields for lack of adequate visitation rates by pollinators.25 Rare cacti in national parks and adjacent to heavily sprayed cotton fields also suffer high levels of floral abortion due to a paucity of moths.26 There are small nature reserves nested within urban areas that contain rare plants, but their flowers wither without producing fruit. In one small reserve within urban Tokyo, for example, a primrose almost completely fails to set seed, owing to local disappearance of its bumblebee pollinator.27**

**The last remaining natural populations of a rare evening primrose live in California's Antioch Dunes National Wildlife Refuge. Though the primrose is protected, its hawkmoth pollinator has not reappeared after years of pesticide spraying in nearby vineyards, and reproduction of the plant has remained low.28 The primrose remains in jeopardy as it produces few fruits and low percentages of viable seeds, while its weedy neighbors produce many. This is just one of many examples where pesticide use, decrease of nectar sources or larval host plants, and other threats have triggered the decline of pollinators of endangered plants.**

**Unfortunately, not even federally listed endangered plants are regularly monitored for pollinator availability. A survey of federal recovery plans for sixteen endangered plants growing near the U. S./Mexico border revealed that the range of available pollinators had been determined for only two of them, and threats to pollinators themselves had not been taken into account at all.**

**Because of such "reciprocities," conservation policy and practice should move toward sustaining or restoring ecological relationships, rather than treating species as isolated organisms. "Critical habitat" needs to be redefined to include needs of both rare plants and their animal associates. When critical habitat has been designated for endangered plants, it has almost always been done without determining foraging and nesting areas required to ensure sufficient pollinators and seed dispersers for long-term recovery of the plant in danger. To begin to resolve some of these discrepancies, the Forgotten Pollinators Campaign is currently working with entomologists and conservation biologists to create pollinator monitoring protocols that can be used by land managers around the country. Migratory pollinators require protection**

**Bats, hummingbirds, moths and butterflies are among the pollinators that seasonally migrate long and short distances between mountain ranges, regions and countries. Their migratory routes are often well-defined "nectar corridors" where the sequence of**

**flowering over a season offers pollinators sufficient energy to sustain their journey. Many of these nectar corridors are no longer fully intact, however; land conversion has eliminated some floral resources over 20 to 60 mile segments, in some cases longer than the distance energy-depleted pollinators can fly in one day.29**

**Scientists and policy makers need to collaborate across political boundaries and regions to assess the continuity and health of migratory corridors used by pollinators. Because some migrants travel 2,000 to 4,000 miles a year, habitat loss in one area of their range may limit their populations overall. Certain migratory pollinator species aggregate in large numbers in temporary roosts that are vulnerable to human disturbance. Such roost sites should be protected throughout a species' entire range since a refuge in just one portion will be insufficient to support a viable population. International policy agreements and environmental education efforts are needed to champion migratory pollinators.**

**A threatened ecological service**

**Interactions between plants and their pollinators are essential to healthy functioning of wild and agricultural communities. Habitat loss, disease, and pesticides take their toll in different ways, but all imperil these vital ecological relationships, many of which developed through thousands of years of natural and cultural selection.**

**Three-quarters of the 100 or so crop species that feed the world depend on animals as go-betweens to ensure that crops are pollinated. Crises like those now faced by the honey-bee industry demonstrate that we lack safety nets to protect agricultural yields. We can no longer justify devoting all research and management dollars to a single or even a few pollinators, but instead must support a diversification of the entire pollination industry.**

**As a society, we need to recognize our debt to the "forgotten pollinators." To successfully confront the impending pollinator crisis, we must work together. Foresters, entomologists and conservationists must devise workable plans for endangered plant species that include pollinators. Farmers, orchard growers, and other land managers need to consider pollinators as they make decisions about pesticides and land use. Educators must emphasize the importance of pollinators in wild and agricultural lands and the interconnectedness of life in general.**

**Urban dwellers can purchase organic produce, include nectar and host plants for pollinators in their gardens, and rely on organic methods of pest and weed control. Pollinator gardening provides hummingbirds, butterflies and other wildlife with important sources of nectar as well as increasing our awareness of the diversity of ecological relationships in our own backyards.**

**In an era when human activities place increasing pressure on both natural and rural landscapes, we cannot ignore the vital role of pollination services and the frequently negative impacts that we are having on plant/pollinator relationships**

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**Mrill Ingham has an M.S. in cultural geography and is coordinator of the Forgotten Pollinators Campaign. Gary Paul Nabhan is an agricultural ecologist and Director of**

**Science at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. Stephen L. Buchmann is a research entomologist at the Carl Hayden Bee Research Center in Tucson, Arizona.**

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**- Some pesticides highly toxic to bees**
**aldrin**
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**carbaryl**
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**dimethoate**
**endosulfan**
**EPN**
**fenitrothion**
**fenthion**
**heptachlor**
**malathion**
**methomyl**
**mevinphos**
**monocrotophos**
**parathion**
**pirimiphos-ethyl**
**phosmet**
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http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7307345.stm

Wednesday, March 26, 2008 BBC News Bat Decline

**US bats fall victim to mystery illness**

**By Matt Wells**
BBC News, Massachusetts

**SEE ALSO**
US fears over honey bee collapse
25 Mar 08 | Science/Nature

**A mystery illness that has scientists baffled is wiping out tens of thousands of bats across the north-east of the US.**

Bats are being woken up too early from hibernation

White nose syndrome, as it is known, cannot even be categorised as a disease.

"Did it spread? I don't know, because we don't know what it is," says government biologist Susie von Oettingen, on a recent fact-finding mission in the frozen woods of Massachusetts.

What is known is that the syndrome leaves small, white, fungal spots around the nose and mouth of the tiny nocturnal animals.

The bats have been woken prematurely from their winter hibernation and, with their fat reserves seriously depleted, their natural impulse is to forage for food.

**Targets**

The reality of the harsh New England winter is that there are no insects to eat so they starve to death.

BBC News joined several local scientists and conservationists in an area of disused mines and caves, close to the border with New York State, where bats are in abundance - including the endangered Indiana bat.

For years, state and federal wildlife officers have nurtured the population, but the apparent spread of the syndrome could undo all that in a matter of months.

Government biologist Susie von Oettingen is concerned

Despite the noon sunshine, which makes them a target for circling birds of prey, hundreds of hungry bats flew above our heads in various states of exhaustion.

"There's a bat crawling across the road," said Ms Oettingen, sighing deeply. "He should not be on the road on a sunny day."

"We have a lot of labs working at a lot of angles and we keep


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trying new ideas out. We're calling each other almost weekly to try and figure this thing out."

One possible link under serious consideration is the equally mysterious catastrophe that has affected the honeybee population.

Colony collapse disorder (CCD) ravaged hives across the US last year, although so far the bat syndrome is confined to the North-East.

> **"I have no doubt we will figure it out. But even once we figure it out, I suspect we'll never be able to do anything about it"**
>
> Tom French, wildlife officer

"If, perchance, this was somehow involved with the spread of insects due to global warming or the use of pesticides - that's a possibility," said Ms Oettingen, who is a specialist in endangered species.

**Alarm bell**

Whatever role human activity and behaviour is playing in the bats' plight, the outcome is sad to witness.

Dozens of bats huddle around the gutters of local homes, desperate for warmth. On the ground, dozens more shrivelled carcasses can be seen on top of the snow and ice.

Massachusetts wildlife officer Tom French led us to one of the mines where the bats should still be huddled together in hibernation. Some of the survivors showed clear signs of white nose syndrome, although others did not.

"It looks like you dipped it in powdered sugar," he said.

"I have no doubt we will figure it out. But even once we figure it out, I suspect we'll never be able to do anything about it," he added, speaking in a whisper to avoid waking any more of the creatures.

He insists that is not the counsel of despair.

He believes that the bats themselves will begin to develop immunity, although nobody knows how far the syndrome will go.


Tom French thinks the bats will start to develop immunity

Alan Hicks is the veteran government conservationist who first spotted the problem last year in a New York cave.

He is aware that bats lack the popular appeal of many other animals, but he thinks the syndrome is yet another environmental alarm bell.

"I don't want my grandkids saying, gosh, what was it like to have bats flying around? I want them to enjoy all the wealth and beauty that we have."


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**US fears over honey bee collapse**

**By Heather Alexander**

**The pollination of crops by bees is responsible for a third of the food produced in the US.**

The US bee population fell by about 30% last year

One in every three mouthfuls has been touched by their tiny feet; but our six-legged friends are in trouble.

They are getting sick and leaving their hives. Without bees, food gets more expensive - some products could disappear altogether.

Colony collapse disorder (CCD) emerged last year, and by spring 2007 bees were dying in huge numbers - over the year as a whole the total bee population fell by 30%.

Some beekeepers lost closer to 90%, and the fear is it will get worse.

Beekeeper Gilly Sherman says: "It's worse than last year, and last year was worse than the year before, so it's bad, and there are a lot of good big beekeepers that are having a lot of problems.

"I think we're coming in for a big train wreck."

**Few answers**

He has moved his bees to Bakersfield, California. The state's Central Valley is home to the largest managed pollination event in the world - 1.5 million hives are transported there on trucks.

That is almost every commercial hive in the country. Without bees there would be practically no almonds, and it's the same for many other crops. Apples, strawberries, even onions, all depend on bees.

Yet despite their importance, there is still no answer to the problem of CCD.

Its causes remain a mystery even after a year of intense publicity.

Part of that is due to lack of funding, say researchers, who rejoiced at the news that Haagen-Dazs, the ice cream maker, is donating $250,000 to their cause.

At Penn State University, nestled in the Pennsylvania countryside, scientists spend day and night working on the problem.

Bees are frozen to preserve them for research

Bees are collected and kept at freezing temperatures to preserve them so they can be ground down to show up viruses, bacteria and other pathogens - basically anything that causes disease.

Many different types have been found, so it is proving difficult to know what the main cause is. A parasite called *Nosema ceranae*, which infects the bee's guts, has been found too.

Raj Singh, who made one of the most recent discoveries, says: "We have found some of the honey bees that are uninfected bringing in pollen pellets from the field, and those pollen pellets were actually infected - that's one of the routes of virus transmission that we've found."

But he admits they are far from finding the "silver bullet" and even further from knowing how to stop it.

**Limited funds**

Entomologist at Penn State, Diana Cox Foster, says it is an urgent problem.

"We do feel that we need additional monies to come in for grants to work on this problem," she said. "We also need to have collaboration internationally to address what the role of different pathogens is."


Beekeeper Gilly Sherman is moving his hives

She acknowledged that a quarter of a million dollars from Haagen-Dazs isn't much when faced with such a mysterious problem, but says better offers from higher authorities are few and far between.

"At the Senate and at the House of Representatives, at the federal level, they have said that they are quite interested and they would like to help a great deal but we haven't yet seen the monies being released for this.

"It is of concern, and hopefully other people will start to see it that way before it hits us in the supermarkets."

Bees' influence on supermarket shelves is vast. As well as fruits and vegetables, it could get as far as beef and dairy products because cows are fed alfalfa - another bee-pollinated plant.

Of course honey would disappear altogether without bees. More money and more commitment to research are called for to keep this essential industry going.

In a world so dominated by man it may come as a big shock to realise there are some things we cannot do without nature's help.

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http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/geneticall7.cfm

About Us

The Center for Food Safety (CFS) is a non-profit public interest and environmental advocacy membership organization established in 1997 by its sister organization, International Center for Technology Assessment, for the purpose of challenging harmful food production technologies and promoting sustainable alternatives. CFS combines multiple tools and strategies in pursuing its goals, including litigation and legal petitions for rulemaking, legal support for various sustainable agriculture and food safety constituencies, as well as public education, grassroots organizing and media outreach.

CFS has offices in Washington, DC and San Francisco, CA.

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## Genetically Engineered Food

The genetic engineering of plants and animals is looming as one of the greatest and most intractable environmental challenges of the 21st Century. Already, this novel technology has invaded our grocery stores and our kitchen pantries by fundamentally altering some of our most important staple food crops.

By being able to take the genetic material from one organism and insert it into the permanent genetic code of another, biotechnologists have engineered numerous novel creations, such as potatoes with bacteria genes, "super" pigs with human growth genes, fish with cattle growth genes, tomatoes with flounder genes, and thousands of other plants, animals and insects. At an alarming rate, these creations are now being patented and released into the environment.

Currently, up to 45 percent of U.S. corn is genetically engineered as is 85 percent of soybeans. It has been estimated that 70-75 percent of processed foods on supermarket shelves--from soda to soup, crackers to condiments--contain genetically engineered ingredients.

A number of studies over the past decade have revealed that genetically engineered foods can pose serious risks to humans, domesticated animals, wildlife and the environment. Human health effects can include higher risks of toxicity, allergenicity, antibiotic resistance, immune-

suppression and cancer. As for environmental impacts, the use of genetic engineering in agriculture could lead to uncontrolled biological pollution, threatening numerous microbial, plant and animal species with extinction, and the potential contamination of non-genetically engineered life forms with novel and possibly hazardous genetic material.

Despite these long-term and wide-ranging risks, Congress has yet to pass a single law intended to manage them responsibly. This despite the fact that our regulatory agencies have failed to adequately address the human health or environmental impacts of genetic engineering. On the federal level, eight agencies attempt to regulate biotechnology using 12 different statutes or laws that were written long before genetically engineered food, animals and insects became a reality. The result has been a regulatory tangle, where any regulation even exists, as existing laws are grossly manipulated to manage threats they were never intended to regulate. Among many bizarre examples of these regulatory anomalies is the current attempt by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to regulate genetically engineered fish as "new animal drugs."

The haphazard and negligent agency regulation of biotechnology has had serious consequences for consumers and the environment. Unsuspecting consumers by the tens of millions are being allowed to purchase and consume unlabeled genetically engineered foods, despite a finding by FDA scientists that these foods could pose serious risks. And new genetically engineered crops are being approved by federal agencies despite admissions that they will contaminate native and conventional plants and pose other significant new environmental threats. In short, there has been a complete abdication of any responsible legislative or regulatory oversight of genetically engineered foods. Clearly, now is a critical time to challenge the government's negligence in managing the human health and environmental threats from biotechnology.

**CFS seeks to** prevent the approval, commercialization or release of any new genetically engineered crops until they have been thoroughly tested and found safe for human health and the environment. CFS maintains that any foods that already contain genetically engineered ingredients must be clearly labeled. End

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http://www.canada.com/topics/news/world/story.html?id=b65b35fd-477f-4956-98f4-c17a46fe3e26&k=40211

**UN rejects water as basic human right**

**Mike De Souza , Canwest News Service**

Published: Tuesday, March 25, 2008

OTTAWA - The Harper government can declare victory after a United Nations meeting rejected calls for water to be recognized as a basic human right.

Instead, a special resolution proposed by Germany and Spain at the UN human rights council was stripped of references that recognized access to water as a human right. The countries also chose to scrap the idea of creating an international watchdog to investigate the issue, choosing instead to appoint a new consultant that would make recommendations over the next three years.

Federal officials in Canada said last week that the government wanted to ensure the meeting's outcome reflected the fact that access to water is not formally recognized as a human right in international law. But a social advocacy group said that the position was designed to protect the right to sell water under the North American Free Trade Agreement.

"Clearly (the Harper government is) happy with the status quo: They're not going to be an agent for change, and they're not going to support the right to water," said Maude Barlow, chair of the Council of Canadians. "About every eight seconds, a child somewhere in the world is dying from dirty water, and it's just shocking that our government has taken this position."

The opposition Liberals supported the government's position last week, arguing that the original UN resolution could open the door to bulk water exports to the U.S. because of NAFTA. Liberal water critic Francis Scarpaleggia said he planned to introduce a private member's bill to restrict large transfers of water within Canada to ensure that bulk exports abroad would also be forbidden.

The UN's high commissioner for human rights, Louise Arbour, said last week that the position doesn't reflect Canada's traditional role on the international stage.

"Canada is taking a position that is not the more classic perceived, Canada as the kind of the bridge builder, peacemaker, consensus maker," Arbour told the CBC.

Meantime, Barlow denied that the resolution would require Canada to make bulk water exports to the U.S.

"The requirement in the United States would be for them to conserve first," said Barlow. "There's no requirement as a human right for us to provide water for swimming pools and golf courses and fountains in Las Vegas."

A spokesperson for the Foreign Affairs Department said in an e-mail that there was "no consensus among states regarding the existence, scope or content of such a right."

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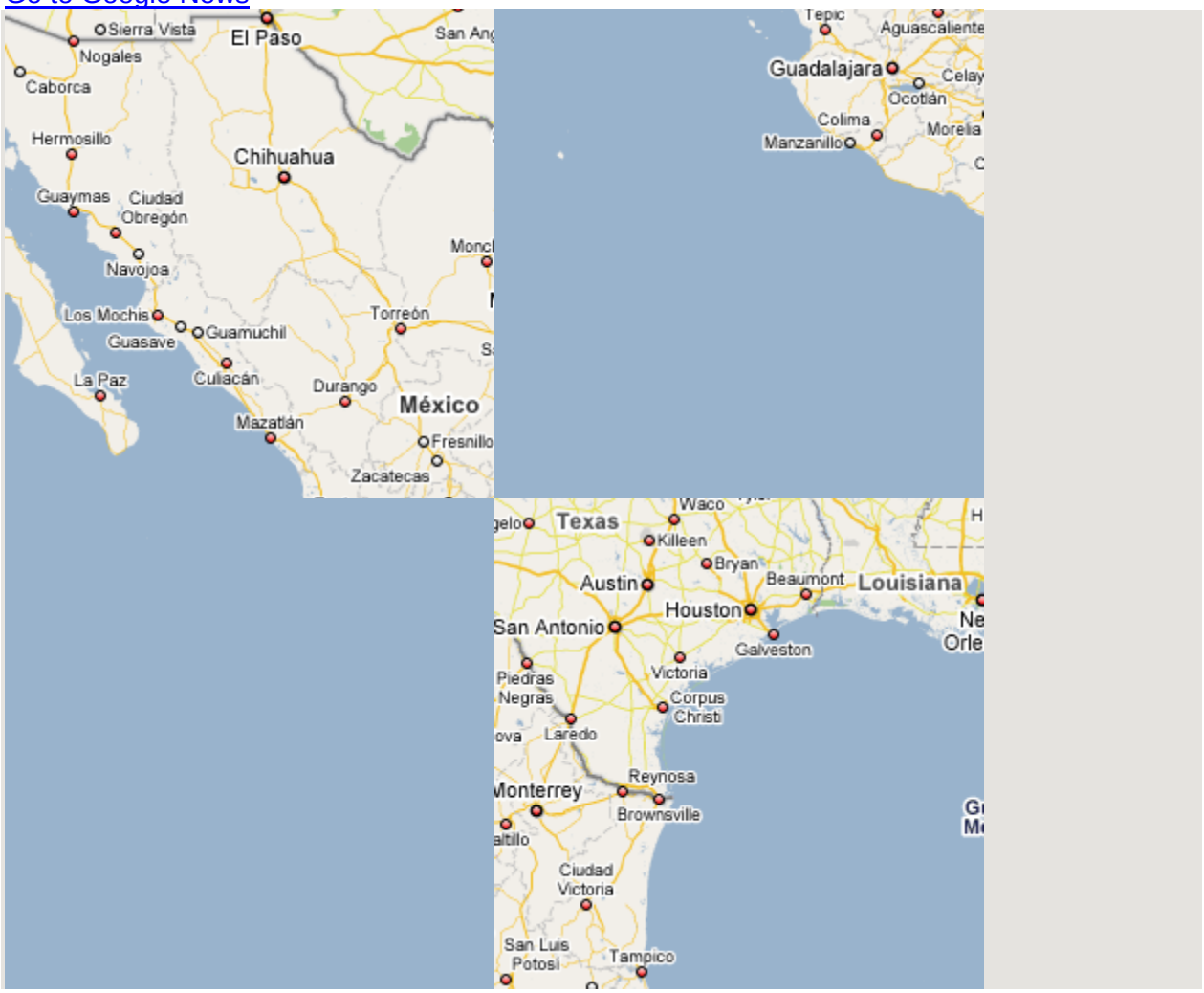

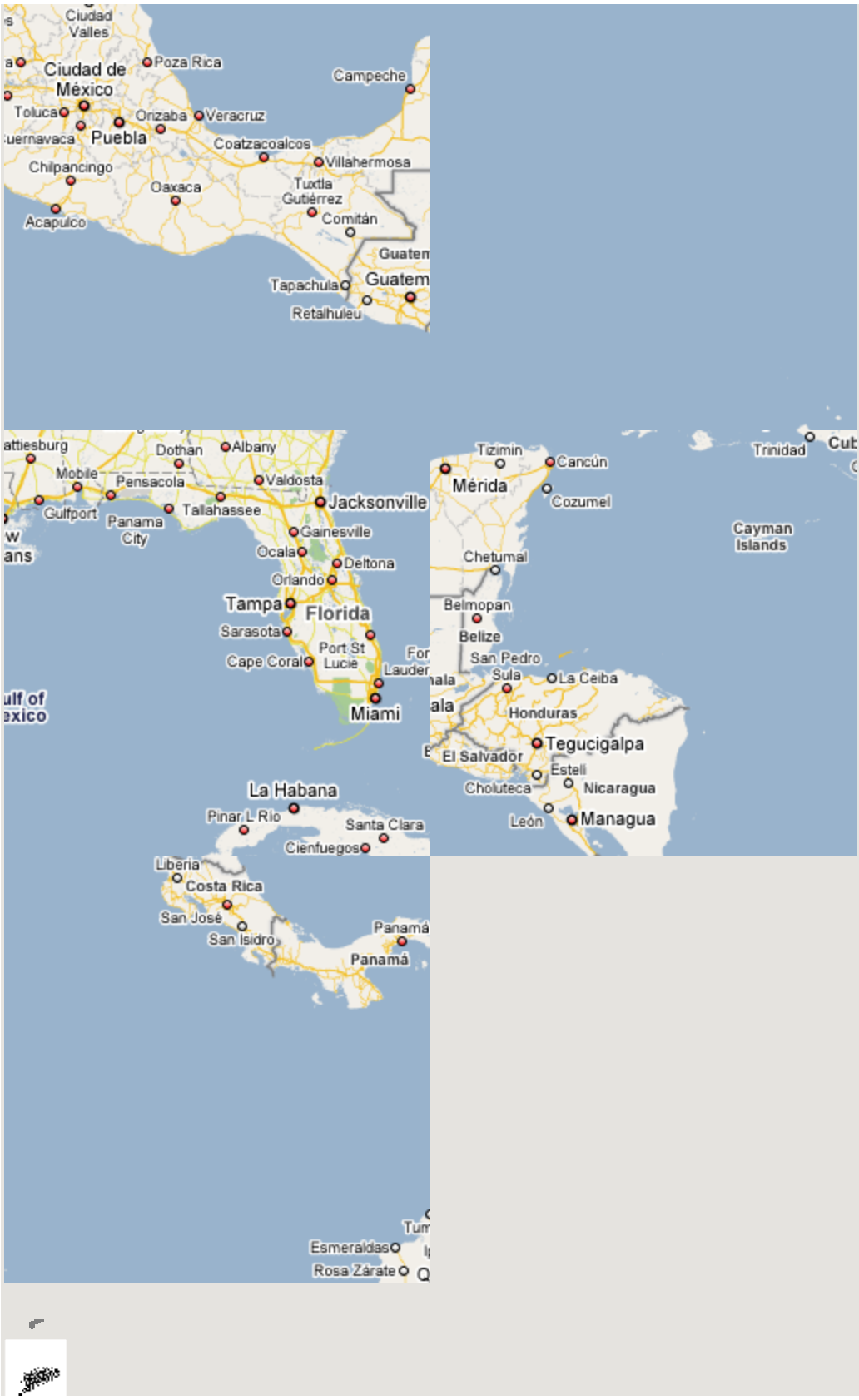
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**Food Prices Soaring Worldwide**

By KATHERINE CORCORAN – Mar 24, 2008

MEXICO CITY (AP) — If you're seeing your grocery bill go up, you're not alone.

From subsistence farmers eating rice in Ecuador to gourmets feasting on escargot in France, consumers worldwide face rising food prices in what analysts call a perfect storm of conditions. Freak weather is a factor. But so are dramatic changes in the global economy, including higher oil prices, lower food reserves and growing consumer demand in China and India.

The world's poorest nations still harbor the greatest hunger risk. Clashes over bread in Egypt killed at least two people last week, and similar food riots broke out in Burkina Faso and Cameroon this month.

But food protests now crop up even in Italy. And while the price of spaghetti has doubled in Haiti, the cost of miso is packing a hit in Japan.

"It's not likely that prices will go back to as low as we're used to," said Abdolreza Abbassian, economist and secretary of the Intergovernmental Group for Grains for the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization. "Currently if you're in Haiti, unless the government is subsidizing consumers, consumers have no choice but to cut consumption. It's a very brutal scenario, but that's what it is."

No one knows that better than Eugene Thermilon, 30, a Haitian day laborer who can no longer afford pasta to feed his wife and four children since the price nearly doubled to $0.57 a bag. Their only meal on a recent day was two cans of corn grits.

"Their stomachs were not even full," Thermilon said, walking toward his pink concrete house on the precipice of a garbage-filled ravine. By noon the next day, he still had nothing to feed them for dinner.

Their hunger has had a ripple effect. Haitian food vendor Fabiola Duran Estime, 31, has lost so many customers like Thermilon that she had to pull her daughter, Fyva, out of kindergarten because she can't afford the $20 monthly tuition.

Fyva was just beginning to read.

In the long term, prices are expected to stabilize. Farmers will grow more grain for both fuel and food and eventually bring prices down. Already this is happening with wheat, with more crops to be planted in the U.S., Canada and Europe in the coming year.

However, consumers still face at least 10 years of more expensive food, according to preliminary FAO projections.

Among the driving forces are petroleum prices, which increase the cost of everything from fertilizers to transport to food processing. Rising demand for meat and dairy in rapidly developing countries such as China and India is sending up the cost of grain, used for cattle feed, as is the demand for raw materials to make biofuels.

What's rare is that the spikes are hitting all major foods in most countries at once. Food prices rose 4 percent in the U.S. last year, the highest rise since 1990, and are expected to climb as much again this year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

As of December, 37 countries faced food crises, and 20 had imposed some sort of food-price controls.

For many, it's a disaster. The U.N.'s World Food Program says it's facing a $500 million shortfall in funding this year to feed 89 million needy people. On Monday, it appealed to donor countries to step up contributions, saying its efforts otherwise have to be scaled back.

In Egypt, where bread is up 35 percent and cooking oil 26 percent, the government recently proposed ending food subsidies and replacing them with cash payouts to the needy. But the plan was put on hold after it sparked public uproar.

"A revolution of the hungry is in the offing," said Mohammed el-Askalani of Citizens Against the High Cost of Living, a protest group established to lobby against ending the subsidies.

In China, the price hikes are both a burden and a boon.

Per capita meat consumption has increased 150 percent since 1980, so Zhou Jian decided six months ago to switch from selling auto parts to pork. The price of pork has jumped 58 percent in the past year, yet every morning housewives and domestics still crowd his Shanghai shop, and more customers order choice cuts.

The 26-year-old now earns $4,200 a month, two to three times what he made selling car parts. And it's not just pork. Beef is becoming a weekly indulgence.

"The Chinese middle class is starting to change the traditional thought process of beef as a luxury," said Kevin Timberlake, who manages the U.S.-based Western Cattle Company feedlot in China's Inner Mongolia.

At the same time, increased cost of food staples in China threatens to wreak havoc. Beijing has been selling grain from its reserves to hold down prices, said Jing Ulrich, chairwoman of China equities for JP Morgan.

"But this is not really solving the root cause of the problem," Ulrich said. "The cause of the problem is a supply-demand imbalance. Demand is very strong. Supply is constrained. It is as simple as that."

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao says fighting inflation from shortages of key foods is a top economic priority. Inflation reached 7.1 percent in January, the highest in 11 years, led by an 18.2 percent jump in food prices.

Meanwhile, record oil prices have boosted the cost of fertilizer and freight for bulk commodities — up 80 percent in 2007 over 2006. The oil spike has also turned up the pressure for countries to switch to biofuels, which the FAO says will drive up the cost of corn, sugar and soybeans "for many more years to come."

In Japan, the ethanol boom is hitting the country in mayonnaise and miso, two important culinary ingredients, as biofuels production pushes up the price of cooking oil and soybeans.

A two-pound bottle of mayonnaise his risen about 10 percent in two months to as much as 330 yen (nearly $3), said Daishi Inoue, a cook at a Chinese restaurant.

"It's not hurting us much now," he said. "But if prices keep going up, we have no choice but to raise our prices."

Miso Bank, a restaurant in Tokyo's glitzy Ginza district, specializes in food cooked with miso, or soybean paste.

"We expect prices to go up in April all at once," said Miso Bank manager Koichi Oritani. "The hikes would affect our menu. So we plan to order miso in bulk and make changes to the menu."

Italians are feeling the pinch in pasta, with consumer groups staging a one-day strike in September against a food deeply intertwined with national identity. Italians eat an estimated 60 pounds of pasta per capita a year.

The protest was symbolic because Italians typically stock up on pasta, buying multiple packages at a time. But in the next two months pasta consumption dropped 5 percent, said farm lobbyist Rolando Manfredini.

"The situation has gotten even worse," he said.

In decades past, farm subsidies and support programs allowed major grain exporting countries to hold large surpluses, which could be tapped during food shortages to keep prices down. But new trade policies have made agricultural production much more responsive to market demands — putting global food reserves at their lowest in a quarter century.

Without reserves, bad weather and poor harvests have a bigger impact on prices.

"The market is extremely nervous. With the slightest news about bad weather, the market reacts," said economist Abbassian.

That means that a drought in Australia and flooding in Argentina, two of the world's largest suppliers of industrial milk and butter, sent the price of butter in France soaring 37 percent from 2006 to 2007.

Forty percent of escargot, the snail dish, is butter.

"You can do the calculation yourself," said Romain Chapron, president of Croque Bourgogne, which supplies escargot. "It had a considerable effect. It forced people in our profession to tighten their belts to the maximum."

The same climate crises sparked a 21 percent rise in the cost of milk, which with butter makes another famous French food item — the croissant. Panavi, a pastry and bread supplier, has raised retail prices of croissants and pain au chocolat by 6 to 15 percent.

Already, there's a lot of suspicion among consumers.

"They don't understand why prices have gone up like this," said Nicole Watelet, general secretary at the Federation of French Bakeries and Pastry Enterprises. "They think that someone is profiting from this. But it's not us. We're paying." Food costs worldwide spiked 23 percent from 2006 to 2007, according to the FAO. Grains went up 42 percent, oils 50 percent and dairy 80 percent.

Economists say that for the short term, government bailouts will have to be part of the answer to keep unrest at a minimum. In recent weeks, rising food prices sparked riots in the West African nations of Burkina Faso, where mobs torched buildings, and Cameroon, where at least four people died.

But attempts to control prices in one country often have dire effects elsewhere. China's restrictions on wheat flour exports resulted in a price spike in Indonesia this year, according to the FAO. Ukraine and Russia imposed export restrictions on wheat, causing tight supplies and higher prices for importing countries. Partly because of the cost of imported wheat, Peru's military has begun eating bread made from potato flour, a native crop.

"We need a response on a large scale, either the regional or international level," said Brian Halweil of the environmental research organization Worldwatch Institute. "All countries are tied enough to the world food markets that this is a global crisis."

Poorer countries can speed up the adjustment by investing in agriculture, experts say. If they do, farmers can turn high prices into an engine for growth.

But in countries like Burkina Faso, the crisis is immediate.

Days after the riots, Pascaline Ouedraogo wandered the market in the capital, Ouagadougou, looking to buy meat and vegetables. She said a good meal cost 1,000 francs (about $2.35) not long ago. Now she needs twice that.

"The more prices go up, the less there is to meet their needs," she said of her three children, all in secondary school. "You wonder if it's the government or the businesses that are behind the price hikes."

Irene Belem, a 25-year-old with twins, struggles to buy milk, which has gone up 57 percent in recent weeks.

"We knew we were poor before," she said, "but now it's worse than poverty."

*Katherine Corcoran is based in Mexico City. AP correspondents worldwide contributed to this report.*